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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 OTTAWA 003285

SIPDIS

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SERIAL: (U) IIR 6 815 0017 05.

COUNTRY: (U) CANADA (CA).

IPSP: (U) IFC1330; IFC1322; IFC1312; IFC1350; IFC1912; IFC1517; IFC1512; IFC1343; IFC1344.

TAGS: [DOD](#)

SUBJECT: IIR 6 815 0017 05/CANADIAN AIR FORCE F/A-18  
MODERNIZATION MOVES AHEAD AMID FLEET LIFE CONCERNS (U)

WARNING: (U) THIS IS AN INFORMATION REPORT, NOT FINALLY  
EVALUATED INTELLIGENCE. REPORT IS CLASSIFIED C O N F I D E N  
T I A L/NOFORN.

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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
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DOI: (U) 20041123.

REQS: (U) DHCD127055; DHCD127051; DHCD204008; DHCD127041;  
DHCD127046; DHCD204011; A-TRI-1343-020-04; A-TRI-1342-044-04.

SOURCE: A. (C/NF) //6 815 0199//SENIOR HOST NATION MILITARY  
OFFICER WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION REPORTED.  
PREVIOUS REPORTING HAS BEEN RELIABLE.

[1](#)B. (C/NF) //6 815 0357// SENIOR HOST NATION MILITARY OFFICER  
WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION REPORTED. PREVIOUS  
REPORTING HAS BEEN RELIABLE.

[1](#)C. (C/NF) //6 815 0362// SENIOR HOST NATION MILITARY OFFICER  
WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE INFORMATION REPORTED. PREVIOUS  
REPORTING HAS BEEN RELIABLE.

[1](#)D. (U) DAILY NEWSPAPER, TORONTO STAR, TORONTO, ONTARIO,  
CANADA, 20041124 (U), IN ENGLISH. WIDELY READ AND FACTUAL  
NEWSPAPER WITH LIBERAL VIEWS.

SUMMARY: (U) SECOND PHASE OF THE CANADIAN F/A-18  
MODERNIZATION PROGRAM FUNDED. F/A-18 FATIGUE LIFE  
MICRO-MANAGED TO STRETCH FLEET UNTIL 2017-2020. MANY DOUBT  
CANADA HAS ENOUGH FIGHTERS.

TEXT: 1. (U) IN OCTOBER 2004, THE TREASURY BOARD OF CANADA  
APPROVED THE SECOND PHASE OF A CDN\$2.6 BILLION PROGRAM TO  
RETROFIT CANADA'S AGEING 1980'S F/A-18A/B AIRCRAFT. OF THE  
ORIGINAL 138 AIRCRAFT ONLY 80 WILL BE FULLY MODERNIZED TO A  
STANDARD SIMILAR TO THE F/A-18C/D.

[1](#)2. (U) THE FIRST TWO PHASES OF THE MODERNIZATION PROJECT  
HAVE NOW BEEN FUNDED. MODERNIZATION WILL BE COMPLETE WITH  
THE INTEGRATION OF THE ADVANCED SHORT-RANGE AIR-TO-AIR  
MISSILE (ASRAAM); ADVANCED MEDIUM RANGE AIR-TO-AIR (AMRAAM);  
ALL WEATHER PRECISION-GUIDED MUNITIONS (LIKELY THE JDAM) AND  
AN ADVANCED MULTI-ROLE INFRARED SENSOR. THE TWO FULLY FUNDED  
PHASES:

[1](#)A. (U) ECP-583R1 CHANGES. NEW MISSION COMPUTER; APG-73  
RADAR; NEW DIGITAL ANTI-JAM RADIOS; COMBINED IFF INTERROGATOR  
TRANSPONDER; NEW STORES MANAGEMENT SYSTEM; NEW COLOR  
DISPLAYS; GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEM (GPS); AND NIGHT VISION  
GOGGLES.

[1](#)B. (U) ECP-583R2 CHANGES. LINK-16 DATALINK; DEFENSIVE  
ELECTRONIC WARFARE SUITE; JOINT HELMET-MOUNTED CUEING SYSTEM;  
AND FLIGHT DATA RECORDER.

[1](#)3. (C) EVEN WITH THE MODERNIZATION PROCESS STILL UNDERWAY,  
CONCERNS HAVE ARISEN ON FLEET AVAILABILITY AND ESTIMATED LIFE  
EXPECTANCY(ELE). OF THE EIGHTY MODERNIZED AIRCRAFT, ONLY  
HALF WILL RECEIVE CENTER BARREL FUSELAGE REPLACEMENTS GIVING  
THEM A SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED ELE. BECAUSE OF COSTS, OF THE  
80 MODERNIZED AIRCRAFT ONLY 48 WILL ASSIGNED TO FOUR  
OPERATIONAL SQUADRONS (TWO AT CFB COLD LAKE, ALBERTA AND TWO  
AT CFB BAGOTVILLE, QUEBEC). GIVEN EVEN OPTIMISTIC READINESS  
RATES OF 70 PERCENT AND NO OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS, THIS MEANS  
THAT CANADA WILL ONLY HAVE A MAXIMUM OF 34 F/A-18 AIRCRAFT  
AVAILABLE ON ANY GIVEN DAY. ACCORDING TO SOURCE A, 34  
AIRCRAFT HAS BEEN RATIONALIZED AS A NUMBER WHICH COULD  
SUPPORT FOUR 24/7 POINT DEFENSE PATROLS (CAPS) - AT EIGHT  
AIRCRAFT REQUIRED PER 24/7 CAP - TO DEFEND FOUR POPULATION  
CENTERS OR FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION. ACCORDING  
TO SOURCE B, IF CUED AND PRE-POSITIONED AT A HIGH STATE OF

READINESS, THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE COULD COVER VANCOUVER, EDMONTON/CALGARY, OTTA WA/MONTREAL, AND TORONTO. THIS WOULD LEAVE ALMOST NO CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE ALERT AIRCRAFT FOR WINNIPEG, HALIFAX, OR QUEBEC CITY.

14. (C/NF) ACCORDING TO SOURCE D, CANADIAN AUDITOR-GENERAL SHEILA ((FRASER)), WHILE FINDING THE MODERNIZATION TO BE A GOOD IDEA, QUESTIONED WHETHER 80 AIRCRAFT WAS A SUFFICIENT NUMBER TO MODERNIZE GIVEN THE CONTEXT OF INCREASED NORAD MISSIONS IN THE POST-9/11 ENVIRONMENT. ONE MAJOR CONCERN IS THAT 17 OF THE 80 AIRCRAFT WILL BE SET ASIDE FOR TRAINING; 17 AIRCRAFT WILL BE IN PHASE/DEPOT REPAIR; TWO AIRCRAFT ARE DEDICATED TO THE AEROSPACE ENGINEERING TEST ESTABLISHMENT (AETE); AND ONE WILL BE DEDICATED TO MAINTENANCE TRAINING. COUPLED WITH NORMAL ATTRITION OF ONE TO TWO AIRCRAFT PER YEAR OVER A DECADE, CANADA COULD BE LOOKING AT LESS THAN 20 OPERATIONAL FIGHTERS AVAILABLE ON ANY GIVEN DAY IN THE 2015-2020 TIMEFRAME.

15. (C) CANADA IS A LEVEL ONE PARTICIPANT IN THE JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER (JSF) PROGRAM, BUT DELAYS IN THAT PROGRAM MAKE CANADA'S DESIRE TO REPLACE THE CF-18S IN 2015-2018 SEEN VERY OPTIMISTIC AND NO ONE SEES CANADA COMMITTING TO JSF UNTIL AT LEAST 2012. INTERNAL AIR FORCE DOCUMENTS CALL FOR A NEW GENERATION FIGHTER CAPABILITY (NGFC) STUDY TO BEGIN IN 2008, ALLOWING SELECTION OF A REPLACEMENT FIGHTER BY 2011, AND PLACING A CONTRACT BY 2012 FOR 2015 DELIVERIES. STATED COMPETITORS AT THIS POINT ARE THE F/A-22 RAPTOR AND THE F-35 JSF (FIELD COMMENT: PURCHASING THE RAPTOR IS A PIPE DREAM FOR THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE AS THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO AFFORD ONE SQUADRON. INSIDERS BELIEVE EVEN THE POTENTIAL JSF BUY WOULD BE AT MOST 50-55 AIRCRAFT AND PERHAPS AS LOW AS 40. EVEN WITH THE INCREASED RELIABILITY OF THE JSF, WHEN ONE FACTORS OUT ALL THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT AIRCRAFT, CANADA COULD VERY EASILY BE IN A POSITION OF ONLY HAVING 24 FIGHTERS OPERATIONALLY AVAILABLE EVEN AFTER MAKING A TRANSITION FROM CF-18 TO JSF TOWARD S 2020.

COMMENTS: 1. (C/NF) FIELD COMMENTS. GETTING THE FUNDING FOR PHASE 2 OF THE MODERNIZATION WAS A MONTH-LONG ODYSSEY AND PROGRAM MANAGERS WERE SKITTISH ABOUT GETTING THE DEAL APPROVED RIGHT UP UNTIL THE TREASURY BOARD BRIEFING.

12. (C/NF) WHEN THE CF-18 ENTERED SERVICE, THERE WERE 96 OPERATIONAL AIRCRAFT FROM WITHIN A TOTAL FLEET SIZE OF 138. THE 1994 WHITE PAPER GAVE DIRECTION TO REDUCE THE CF-18 FLEET SIZE TO BETWEEN 48 AND 60 OPERATIONAL FIGHTERS. BUDGET 95, THE NEXT SPRING, CONFIRMED 60 TO BE THE MINIMUM NUMBER. WHITE PAPER DIRECTION TO REDUCE FIGHTER OPERATING COSTS BY 25 PERCENT WERE MET. IN 1997, THE SYNOPSIS SHEET IDENTIFICATION (SS(ID)) FOR CF-18 MODERNIZATION CALLED FOR THE MODERNIZATION OF UP TO 100 CF-18S (60 IDENTIFIED AS 'OPERATIONAL' AIRCRAFT). IN JUNE 2000, DND ISSUED DIRECTION TO REDUCE THE SCOPE OF MODERNIZATION PLANS TO 80 AIRCRAFT, BASED MUCH MORE UPON BUDGETARY REASONS THAN OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS.

13. (C/NF) THE AUDITOR-GENERAL WILL LIKELY FORCE THE GOVERNMENT TO GO BACK AND REVIEW WHETHER 80 FIGHTERS IS ENOUGH FOR CANADA. THEY ARE LIKELY TO DETERMINE IT IS NOT, BUT LEAVE IT AS AN UNFUNDED REQUIREMENT OR PERHAPS EXTEND THE MODERNIZATION TO ANOTHER 4-6 AIRCRAFT.

14. (C/NF) FLYING HOURS FOR CF-18 PILOTS HAVE BEEN IN STEADY DECLINE FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS FALLING FROM 240-270 HOURS IN THE 1980S TO AN AVERAGE OF 182 HOURS IN CY2003. NUMBER OF PILOTS HAS DROPPED FROM 92 TO 68 AND THE AIR FORCE IS HAVING TROUBLE RECRUITING EVEN VERY SMALL NUMBERS TO TRAIN EACH YEAR. THE YEARLY F/A-18 FLYING PROGRAM HAS DROPPED FROM 28,045 HOURS IN FY93/94 TO LESS THAN 17,000 HOURS FOR FY03/04. LESS FLYING MEANS LOWER PILOT MORALE; LACK OF SPARE PARTS AND MAINTENANCE SUPERVISORS QUALIFIED FOR INSPECTIONS INCREASES PERSTEMPO; AND NEW TRAINING ON THE MODERNIZED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS ALL STRESS THE CANADIAN AIR FORCE FIGHTER FORCE.

15. (U) SOURCES REMAIN AVAILABLE FOR FURTHER EXPLOITATION.

16. (C/NF) THIS REPORTING SUPPORTS PRIORITY 2, PARAGRAPH 2A, AND PRIORITY 3, PARAGRAPHS 1A, 1B AND 1D OF THE DAO OTTAWA OPERATING DIRECTIVE.

17. (U) DIRECT ANY QUESTIONS CONCERNING THIS IIR TO DHO-1 AT STU III (703) 907-0541, OR GRAY 981-8236.

COLL: (U) AB; AC; AD; AH; AI.

INSTR: (U) US NO.

PREP: (U) 6-03048.

ACQ: (U) CANADA, OTTAWA (20041126).

DISSEM: (U) FIELD: AMEMB OTTAWA.

WARNING: (U) REPORT CLASSIFIED

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DRV FROM: DO HUMINT SCG OCTOBER 2004

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